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THE BEACH Tourists come to South Beach for the vast white sand.

Doing Deco



VACATIONING IN ART DECO DISTRICT GIVES THE FLAVOR OF THE '30S

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The showcase street in Miami Beach's Art Deco District is becoming more than a film facade: It's turning into a true vacation destination, with its share of history, sun, surf and nightlife.

From the Waldorf Towers at Ninth Street and Ocean Drive to the Cavalier Hotel at 13th Street, there is a rush of street traffic and activity the old Beach hasn't seen in 20 years.

The porches of the Art Deco District have become genuine gathering places. The nightclubs have become hot spots. There are new restaurants, from the elegant Cafe des Arts in the Locust Apartments to Crowdaddy's in South Pointe Park and The Strand on Washington Avenue. Others are on the way. Many of the old hotels, after years of neglect and decay, have been restored to their 1930s splendor.

The change has been recognized by the authoritative trade magazine Travel Weekly: "Their chic restaurants and lively entertain-

**SOUTH
BEACH**



**AT THE
TURNING
POINT**

surroundings and sophisticated decor with lower rates."

But Ocean Drive is not for everyone.

Rooms in the restored Art Deco hotels might turn off tourists accustomed to the homogenized comfort of, say, a Holiday Inn, or the glitzy luxury and services of the Fontainebleau Hilton. That's because Ocean Drive, even when its hotels were new, was never a luxury resort. It was built for working-class Northern vacationers in the tail end of the Depression. The beach and the lobbies were the main attractions.

Rooms are smaller than those of motel chains, many only accommodating one queen-sized bed. You may not find an ice bucket in your room, or a room service menu. Not all the hotels have

pools.

In most renovated properties, you will find high ceilings, Deco fixtures and period furniture — not the standard Formica and vinyl.

It's all part of the charm.

"It's not your slick trick, where you come in and pay \$200 a night to be on the ocean

Deco District will charm you

DECO / from 1J

ateur Tony Goldman, who is restoring the Park Central and Imperial hotels. "It's not a luxury, expensive scene. It's going to be welcome-to-1937 authentic. It's directed at an unpretentious, relaxed, chic and fun crowd, high-energy people who have no problem mixing it up with people of all kinds."

As a weekend getaway, South Beach offers a wide selection of rates and rooms, a terrific stretch of open sand, a variety of good music and food, historic tours and great perches for people watching, day and night. It's considerably cheaper than the more established Fontainebleau Hilton and Doral hotels.

The beach isn't blocked by huge hotels; the low-rise Deco hotels are across the street. It is white and wide, and there are park benches under the coconut palms near the street, as well as two areas set aside for volleyball, at 14th Street and the ocean, where Penrod's has a beach concession, and at the 10th Street Community Center.

The restored hotels range widely in price, accommodations and service.

Waldorf Towers

The most expensive and attentive is the Waldorf Towers, 860 Ocean Dr. Run by veteran Clearwater hotelier Don Meginley and his family, it offers lovely rooms, personalized service, an official hotel cat named Sweetie, free croissants and coffee for breakfast and the highest rates on the strip. Summer rates start at \$80.

But a stay at the Waldorf is special. During our visit, we found that after check-in, the front desk clerks remembered our names, room and needs. When we needed sodas, an ice-filled cooler was delivered. When we ordered champagne, it was delivered and uncorked by a waiter in tux and tails.

When we headed to the beach, the desk clerk handed us big, fluffy beach towels.

Meginley makes no apologies for his prices.

"I want to be the most expensive place, because we provide more services, staff and amenities," he said. "We try to appeal to European markets. If you are nice to people, it's amazing to see how pleasant they think it is."

Standard summer room rates at other hotels range from \$30 a night at the partially renovated Clevelander to \$50 at the Edison, Cavalier, Carlyle and Leslie hotels.

Oceanfront rooms in restored Ocean Drive hotels range from \$50 at the Clevelander to \$125 at the Waldorf. The view of Dade County's widest beach is well worth the added expense. As the sun rises in the morning, the view is positively breathtaking.

In transition

The Clevelander is a hotel in transition. Run by the Kaye family of Chicago, it offers friendly service. Its facade has been restored, and the lobby has been spruced up, though not completed. Central air is being installed and should be ready in the next month. Rooms — larger than most on Ocean Drive, accommodating two double beds — have been redone on the first four floors. Plans have been drawn for a res-



Bing Hampton of Coconut Grove does a back flip into the Edison Ho

Deco Hotels

ART DECO HOTELS (run by the Royale Group): The **Carlyle**, 1250 Ocean Dr., 56 rooms, built in 1941; **Cavalier**, 1320 Ocean Dr., 56 rooms, built in 1936; **Leslie**, 1244 Ocean Dr., 37 rooms, built in 1937. Summer rates: \$50 standard room; \$60 ocean view, \$75 ocean-front, suites \$95 and up. Restaurant, lounge, cafe, piano bar. **Cardozo**, 1300 Ocean Dr., 70 rooms, built in 1939, to reopen in late summer.

Betsy Ross, 1440 Ocean Dr., 79 rooms, built in 1940. Renovation to be complete next year.

Breakwater, 940 Ocean Dr., 75 rooms, built in 1939. Tobacco Road night club to open a branch late summer, hotel to reopen in winter.

Clevelander, 1020 Ocean Dr., 64 rooms, built in 1938. Partially restored. Pool. Larger-than-average rooms. Kitchenettes. Summer rates: \$30 standard, \$40 ocean view, \$50 ocean-front.

Edison, 960 Ocean Dr., 67 rooms, built in 1935. Summer rates: \$50 and \$60 ocean view; \$80 ocean-front; \$100 and \$120 penthouse suites. Restaurant, nightclub, pool.

Imperial, 650 Ocean Dr., 48 rooms, built in 1939. Music and dance club. Hotel to open in summer, club in November. Rooms will start at \$35.

Park Central, 640 Ocean Dr., 80 rooms, built in 1937. Hotel to reopen in summer. Nightclub and restaurant to open in November. Most rooms, larger than average.

hoped to have breakfast at the promised 10 a.m. opening time. "We may open by 11 a.m.," a Tropics employee told us. "The cook didn't show up."

With few exceptions, patience isn't a virtue here. It's a necessity.

Barron says that finding good help has been a nightmare since he opened up in December. He promises it will get better as he and other hoteliers work with St. Thomas University's hospitality training program.

"We're so new we still have our diapers on," he said.

Service also was spotty at Jazz at the Waldorf, the intimate nightclub in the Waldorf Towers basement. At one point, our group wondered if we were going to die thirsty. But the music was sensational.

The best food service we found on the strip was at Cafe des Arts, the romantic restaurant in the Locust Apartments, 918 Ocean Dr. The food was good, though a little pricey.

New standards

Goldman pledges to set a new standard for Ocean Drive service, joining the Waldorf and Cafe des Arts, when he opens the renovated Park Central and Imperial to hotel guests in the summer and to diners in the fall.

Rates will range from \$35 to \$95 — rooms in the Park Central are larger than most in on Ocean Drive — and the theme will be "1937 in 1987," he said.

Vintage photographs of Ocean Drive's heyday will adorn the rooms. "There will be a sense of hospitality, care and service," Goldman said.

"There will be big fluffy towels, soft cushions and great service. It is a scarce commodity, and it presents

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Plans have been drawn for a restaurant and refurbished pool deck.

The three properties run by Art Deco Hotels offer nicely restored rooms with Deco-period appointments, fine suites and good gathering spots. The lobbies vary from the mahogany elegance of the Leslie to the sparkling Deco in the Cavalier. The Carlyle Grille in the Carlyle lobby and front porch is a great spot to sip a drink, people watch or dine. The SoBe Cafe in the Leslie offers late-night dessert with a side dish of light jazz.

The Edison Hotel, restored by developer Gerry Sanchez, has fine rooms, a lovely and active pool deck and an affordable restaurant and club in Arthur Barron's Tropics International. On a recent Saturday

nightclub, pool.

Imperial, 650 Ocean Dr., 48 rooms, built in 1939. Music and dance club. Hotel to open in summer, club in November. Rooms will start at \$35.

Park Central, 640 Ocean Dr., 80 rooms, built in 1937. Hotel to reopen in summer. Nightclub and restaurant to open in November. Most rooms, larger than average, from \$65 to \$75.

Waldorf Towers, 860 Ocean Dr., 42 rooms, built in 1937. Summer rates: \$70 ocean view; \$125 oceanfront, \$150 oceanfront suite. Restaurant, jazz club.

afternoon, a band played by the pool, and the restaurant and hotel buzzed with activity. That night, another band played inside. By midnight, customers were waiting for tables.

They were also waiting for service, a scarce resource in many Ocean Drive properties. Things got worse the next morning, when we

hospitality, care and service," Goldman said.

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